

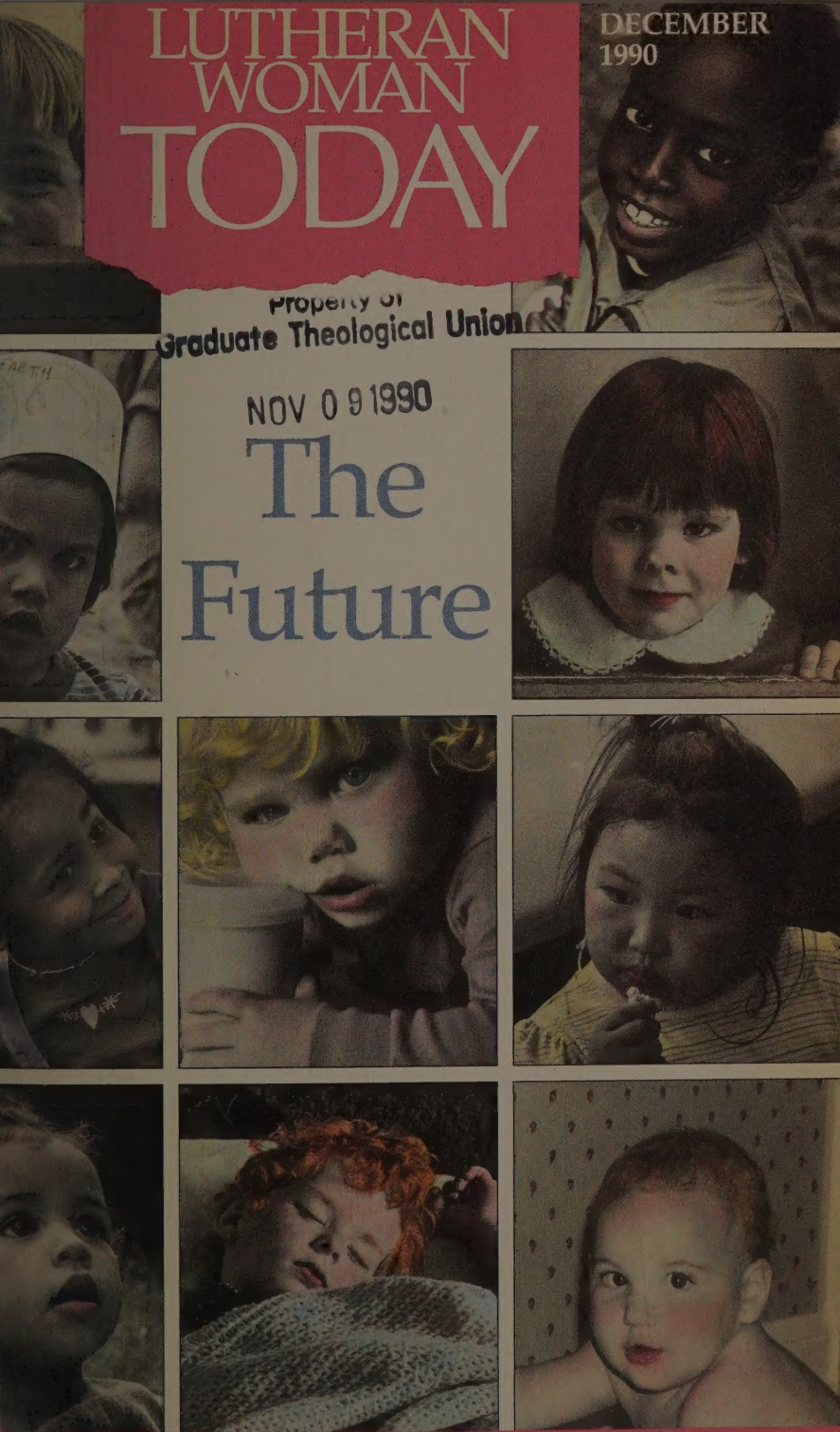
# LUTHERAN WOMAN TODAY

DECEMBER  
1990

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## The Future



*For Growth in Faith and Mission*

## Cover meditation ♦♦

"When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways" (1 Corinthians 13:11, New Revised Standard Version).

This is perhaps the only time of year when we really work at being children. We remember how it felt to be a child, to be filled with that anticipation that each day will be better, somehow, than the day before. How we wish we could recapture that total sense of trust and well-being! As proud as Paul is of his accomplishment in "putting an end to childish ways," I still sense a wistfulness in his tone when I read this Corinthians passage in December.

In today's world more than before we know how risky it is to be a child. Dangers seem to lurk all around, and it seems wise to train our children to put aside childish ways as early as possible. Nowadays, we are told, it is best to be savvy, mature, cynical—even as children. Our teenagers quickly become veterans of disappointment, fear, and uncertainty in a world that seems to make no promises and give no quarter.

Perhaps that is why God's promise to Jeremiah speaks to us so powerfully during Advent and Christmas. "For surely I know the plans I have

for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope" (29:11).

Dare to trust me, God is saying. Be my child. I won't let you down, even show you how it's done! God in the stable in Bethlehem, and you see. Risk! Dream! Dare!

Dear God, as we behold the child of Bethlehem, let us rediscover the child in each of us. Help us to trusting you and following in your way with a faith renewed by the abundance of this season. We pray in the infant Savior's name. Amen

*Donna Hacker Smith  
Freeport, Illinois*

### ON THE COVER:

1		2
3		4
5	6	7
8	9	10

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## FEATURES

### THE GENUINE HOPE OF GOD

*Karen Melang*

What do we want? What is it we hope for? **g**

### WHOSE CHILD IS THIS?

*Judith Mattison*

Children are part of our future and our hope. **c**

### HOPE FOR THE FUTURE: CHILDREN AS STEWARDS

*Mary Ingram*

The Peli-can Project helps children be stewards. **A**



### 12 THE COLORS OF HOPE

*Doris Strieter*

The letters and drawings of a political prisoner speak of love and hope. **A**

### 14 THE ENDNOTE OF ADVENT

*Judy Hoshek*

During Advent we prepare for the birth of Jesus and the *eschaton*. **g**

### 17 EVERYWHERE A BETHLEHEM

*Phyllis N. Kersten and*

*E. Louise Williams*

The 1990 Bible study writers reflect on companions from the journey. **c g**



### THE CHRISTMAS GIFT

*Eva Augustin Rumpf*

A visitor adds to a family's Christmas celebration. **c**

### THE MANY CHRISTMASES OF CHRISTMAS

*Irene Getz*

Have yourselves merry little Christmases! **g c**

## 32 A LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

*Fern Lee Hagedorn*

Evangelism is communicating God's love in languages of the heart. **C** **g** **A**

## 34 WAKING UP TO OUR MULTICULTURAL CHURCH

*Madeleine Forell Marshall*

Does the future still promise a multicultural church? **C** **g** **A**

## 36 TIME TO HEAR

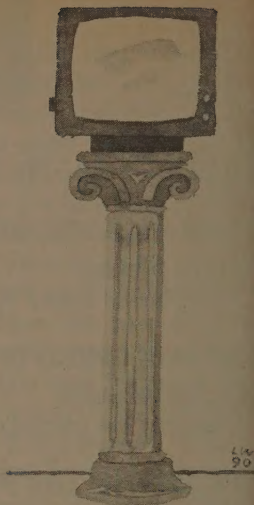
*Linda Woods Peterson*

Part of a series on media and values, this article examines television viewing. **g**

## 41 FAITHFUL STEWARDSHIP

*Lilyan Pollack*

To tithe, save *and* make ends meet—start with a plan. **g** **A** **C**



## D E P A R T M E N T S

Cover meditation

40 Shorttakes

16 Earthcare

44 Women of the ELCA

20 Bible study

48 Devotion

For the benefit of Women of the ELCA participants, articles relating Women of the ELCA mission areas are marked with these symbols: **A** = action, **C** = community and **g** = growth. When more than one mission is reflected in an article, the primary focus is shown first.

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### Editor

Nancy J. Stelling

### Associate Editor

Sue Edison-Swift

### Editorial Secret

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### Production Editor

Ann Harrington

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Gayle V. Aldrich

### Graphic Design

Lilja Baehr Design

### Photos & Art

James L. Shaffer, 6a, 6b, 7b, 7c, 8a, 8b; Marja Bergen, 6c, 7a; Mark Coyle, 11; Patricio & Juan Carlos/Amnesty International USA, 12, 13; Lilja Baehr Design, 17-19, 20-25, 27-29, 30-31, 41-43; Lars Wikfeldt, 37-39.

# The Genuine Hope of God

Karen Melang

**I**t is the season of expectation, the time of the year, perhaps more than any other, when hopes run high. Long ago our ancestors looked expectantly to the southern sky, hoping that soon the days would get longer and the light would return. Today little children stand in line to tell that jolly, red-suited elf what their wishes are. Grownups are even asked what they want, and it is a question worth pondering. What do we want? What is it that we hope for?

In many ways our hopes determine what we value and how we act. Hopes shape how we see the present and the past. What we want determines not only what we get, but who we are.

The Bible brims with stories about what people wanted, about how their hopes changed them, about what they got or what got them. Adam and Eve wanted their eyes opened, to be like God, to know good and evil. They didn't read the fine print before eating the fruit. When their eyes were opened, they saw only their nakedness and hid.

**S**arah thought she would play God and make sure Abraham got his promised son when it didn't seem as if God were taking care of business. Abraham did get a son—Ishmael—from Sarah's maid Hagar, but there was never peace between the two women. Today in the Middle East, Sarah's children and Hagar's children still fight and die in seemingly endless sibling rivalry.

Adam, Eve and Sarah were never the same again because of what they wanted and what they got. Getting what they hoped for had unexpected, serious conse-



**God intends to give us genuine hope, hope that may look different than we expected.**

quences. We sometimes find, to our horror, that what we hoped for comes with lots of little—or not so little—extras we didn't know about, that we didn't want and that are nonreturnable.

Who would have guessed that, when all we wanted was the good life, we would get miles and miles of concrete, untold tons of trash, polluted air and water, and an environment pushed to the brink of disaster? No one could have predicted that once we had labor-saving, time-saving gadgets galore, we would feel even more pressured and harried as we run breathlessly from one frantic activity to the next.

**H**ope takes other turns, too. Endlessly unfulfilled, hope can turn on us and disintegrate bit by bit into hopelessness. Time and again during 40 years of desert wandering, Israel gave up on both God and Moses. The manna that was the bread of hope, straight from God's hand, began to look like leftovers. In Babylon, exiled from home, with no ready hope of going back, God's people despaired of ever singing the songs of Zion again. And the disciples, trudging to Emmaus on Easter evening, told the stranger that they had hoped this Jesus would redeem Israel—but he had landed on a cross.

Sometimes hope mocks us, laughing in our faces. When we encounter serious illness or a tangle of family difficulties, we may feel as though we are being forced to ride a roller coaster of hope, then despair, then hope, then despair, never knowing where we'll stop—but sure that we cannot keep hoping much longer.

If we find ourselves holding a bag of hopes gone bad, or if we find ourselves unable to hope at all, there is good news: God intends to give us genuine hope, hope that may look different than we had expected, but hope that can change our meager wants into more than we could have dreamed. Most of the time we hardly have a clue as to what God, the grand giver, is planning. But if we are willing to trust God to reshape our hopes and plans, we are in for some fine surprises.

Ruth hoped that she could feed her bitter mother-in-law the day she hugged Naomi and told her that she wouldn't leave, that Naomi's God was her God too. Anyone with a lick of common sense would have gone home

## Hopes reshaped by God may require us to change our choices.

to old gods and a new husband. But Ruth turned her hopes over to God, and food for Naomi was the least of what she got. She had not counted on a new family and Jesus in her family tree! She got far more than she could have hoped for.

Mary, the mother of our Lord, hoped to marry a nice man and be a carpenter's wife. But when an angel came to her one day, she did not hesitate to let her hopes be reshaped by the startling news of a baby. Tongues may have wagged in Nazareth, but Mary sang about the God who scatters the proud and exalts the lowly. If Mary had held on to her own hopes, we would not remember her every time we say the creeds. But Mary made God's hopes her own.

**G**od is anxious to reshape our hopes and give us new ones, too. These renovated hopes may be considerably different than our original hopes. They may take us to places as foreign to us as Bethlehem was to Ruth. We may answer yes to an unexpected turn of events, as Mary did, and end up with whole new lives.

Hopes reshaped by God may require us to change our choices, make difficult decisions or trust ourselves to God's care even when we are miserable. Very likely we will be asked to give up our own agendas so God can give us new gifts, instead of what we thought we wanted.

In that case, not only will our hopes change, we will also be recreated into people who can dream God's amazing dreams for all creation. Even resurrections won't shock us. And we won't be too surprised that God's idea of hope starts with a poor baby, born in a barn to parents who had not planned for him—parents who had just stood in line to pay their taxes to a government of military occupation. ■

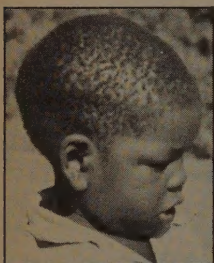
*Karen Melang, trained as a deaconess at Valparaiso University, Indiana, is a professional communicator at the University of Nebraska Co-operative Extension. She served as a facilitator for recent churchwide Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's Mission: Community team consultations.*





# Whose child is this?

Judith Mattison



**What better evidence have we of God's work of hope in the world than children?**

During 1988 my son Ted and his wife Kathryn lived at my home while she finished her senior year in college and he battled Hodgkin's disease. Since Ted's chemotherapy was very demanding, the two often spent their time quietly. One of their favorite spots was our front deck, where they sat watching the neighborhood activities.

Often when I came home from work for supper, they would be there, surrounded by several small children, the little ones enjoying the attention this young couple gave them.

The sight warmed my spirit. Patiently the young couple would enjoy the children's company, set limits on their behavior, praise and welcome even the noisy, unruly ones.

These children were fortunate to find adults willing to share their time and attention. Ted and Kathryn were also lucky. They had an opportunity to serve and enjoy the spontaneity and rewards of being with children.

In Jeremiah 29:11-14, God reminds us that even those who have fallen away from God, living in separation from God's in-

tention for humankind will be brought back into God's arms of love and acceptance. This is surely the promise and hope of Christmas. And what better evidence have we of God's work of hope in the world than children? The child can be shaped by love in profound and lasting ways. The child is unspoiled by what adults have come to experience as cynicism. The child—of hope, from God. God's promise for a future.

During this season we focus a great deal on children. We attempt to be moderate in our emphasis on presents and entertainment; yet it is also true that most of us devote much thinking and planning around children at Advent and Christmas.

Jeremiah seems to call us to a deeper, longer-term commitment. If we consider our lives part of God's plan for the whole created world, and our decisions and experiences part of the fulfillment of that promise, what place do children have in our lives? Whether during this holy season, on the deck of a home in spring, how do our relationships with children reveal and unfold the promises of God? "For I know



plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11, Revised Standard Version).

There are those who suggest that our society has an anti-child attitude. The young, upwardly mobile couple might see children as a threat to life-long goals. People without children, or with grown children, may mistakenly believe they have no responsibility for the children of others.

Those who separate themselves from children lose the joy these young discoverers can bring. At the same time our children are deprived of the security and care of an extended community.

My grandfather talked about crossing the Swedish mountains, skiing from his hometown to the sea, where, as a teenager, he went off for the Americas. I have great pride in him, living that journey, and going to a land where he taught himself to read a strange language and became well-educated entirely on his own. His story inspires me. What if grandpa had been too busy to take time to tell me his story? I witness frequently to him and offered to me a future.

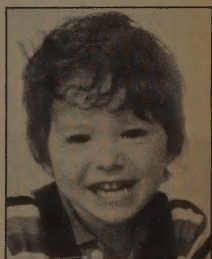
Along the city streets in summer I watch children playing, many of them un-

supervised while their parents are working. I am saddened. Who helps them understand how to solve problems? Who gives them an opportunity to go to the zoo? Who holds a three-year-old and tells a story or reads a book? Are such times a luxury available only to those who can afford it? Sometimes it seems that way, since many poor people must pay a disproportionate amount of their income for child care (even though child-care workers are most often paid poorly for their valuable work). The injustices of society seem most cruel when children are the victims.

Ted and Kathryn were on the right track, I think. They did not distinguish among children as "ours" and "theirs." They saw all children as part of God's family, and therefore, part of their family. Everyone's child is our child: latchkey children, hungry children, neighbor children. All adults are, in a sense, parents, blessed with maturity, judgment and stories to tell; we have something wonderful to give children—the promise of a future.

Our future began in a stable, where a mother named Mary birthed a child for all of us, sharing with us the gift of new life—God's gift to humankind. The child Jesus was and is the hope of the

**T**hose who separate themselves from children lose the joy these young discoverers can bring.



# Children

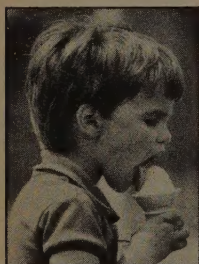
*They walk the sidewalk  
or drive in heavy-duty  
plastic cars.*

*Small beings*

*full of as much mystery  
and potential for life  
as the tulip sprouts of  
spring.*

*They remain our hope—  
the ones who ask questions  
and lie on grass, humming,  
watching clouds.*

*They know what we avoid—  
life is not clocks or roads.  
It isn't even being right.*



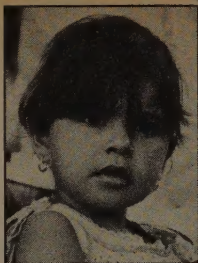
*Life  
is letting in the sunrise  
because it's new  
and getting ice cream  
on fingers  
and collars  
because it tastes good.*

*Life is laughing without thought  
and crying when we cannot  
find an answer  
or a reason  
or a friend.*

*Life is now  
and love is fresh—  
in God.*

*The children know.*

*From Life Is Good, Life Is Hard:  
Meditations for Daily Living by  
Judith Mattison. Copyright © 1987  
Augsburg Publishing House.*

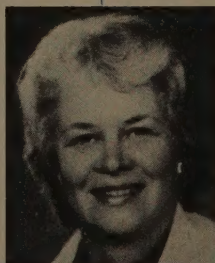


world. And as we act responsibly toward children we are living out that same hope. We can provide well-trained, adequately paid teachers for our children. We can feed the hungry, volunteer in schools, establish day-care centers, teach our children how to live with less, and witness to the faith.

Our example will speak louder than our platitudes. We can seek peace and do justice. We can demonstrate stewardship. We can love one another. Our best gifts to children are our stories, our time, our encouragement, our praise. Every child is our child, because every child belongs to God.

Perhaps our smallest attempts will change a life, give a young one hope and self-confidence. We can be living, breathing hope for one of God's little people. What better gift! What greater investment? What a Christmas blessing in the name of the One, the Child, who promises and gives us a future and hope! ■

*The Rev. Judith Mattison is an associate pastor at Mt. Olivet Lutheran Church, Minneapolis. Her latest book, Delight in the Gift, a devotional book for mothers, will be available soon from Augsburg Fortress.*





## Hope for the Future:

# Children as Stewards

Mary Ingram

Care of creation is a concern being voiced more and more frequently these days. We hear it in our congregations and in "the world." We are concerned about the future for ourselves and for generations yet to come. And we frequently hear the word *stewardship* used in reference to the care of creation.

We often define stewardship as the use of the gifts God has entrusted to our care—ourselves, our time, our possessions and the earth itself. We are helping people, especially children, to understand stewardship in this way—and indeed to be active stewards—is crucial for the church.

Care of creation is one aspect of stewardship education—and an important one. But, we may ask, what are children to do to care for creation? Is it stewardship an *adult* responsibility? How important is it to teach stewardship to children?

Attitudes and habits we learn as youngsters tend to stay with us as we grow up. Proverbs 22:6 says it simply: "Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray" (New Revised Standard Version). As we grow, we develop a way of seeing the world.

Believing that God has given us a part in creation and that we are called to be stewards of this gift, is one way of viewing the world. If children accept this view, they will take better care of themselves and the earth.

Children hear all sorts of bad news about the state of the earth and it is often hard for them to be hopeful about their future. They can feel overwhelmed. They may lose sight of God's promise of good for them: "For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope" (Jeremiah 29:11, NRSV).

But if children know that other children all across the country are working together to make a difference in God's creation, then the picture can change and hope can blossom. Children can come to know that caring for creation is what God has

## Stewardship

*is the use of the gifts God has entrusted to our care—ourselves, our time, our possessions and the earth itself.*



called them to do and that God is with them in whatever they do to help the earth. Such children can be a powerful, positive force in and for the future.

**A** new stewardship and hunger education program that touches on these concerns is *The Peli-can Project*. The Peli-can Project is a program for children that teaches stewardship and offers hands-on ways for children to become active stewards. The first year's materials focus on care of creation. Peli is a "personable" brown pelican that teaches and motivates the children. Resources provide a biblical foundation for stewardship, as well as a wide variety of activities in which children can become involved to care for God's gifts. Youngsters will have opportunities to be stewards in their own communities and to raise funds for specific tree-planting and water-use projects in Bangladesh.



**Peli-can**  
is a program for children that teaches stewardship and offers hands-on ways for children to become active stewards.



**Peli**  
*a personable brown pelican  
teaches and motivates the  
children in this program*

The Peli-can Project is designed for elementary-school-age children. Leaders of the Peli-can Project could include Sunday school teachers, youth, pastors, stewardship committee members, environmentalists, anyone with an interest in stewardship. The program has many parts that can be used in all kinds of settings—Sunday school, vacation Bible schools, after-school programs, camps or Christian day schools.

A program like the Peli-can Project is a natural for children (though adults will have fun with it too). First, it is an active approach. Children aren't just "learning about" stewardship; they actually become stewards working to make a difference. Second, children learn the biblical foundations for caring for themselves and the earth—a wonderful starting point for shaping Christian stewards!

The Peli-can Project also provides a ready opportunity to build community. Community happens as children, youth, and adults learn and



work in local congregations. Community happens as God's children across the country and the world become active stewards—with a hope for the future.

The Peli-can Project encourages children to realize that they can and make a difference in the world. That they can care and help others are, too.

Look for a catalog featuring the Peli-can Project resources in the Par-

ish Education packet and the Stewardship Packet, which will be mailed to Evangelical Lutheran Church in America congregations in Spring 1991. ■

*Mary Ingram, specialist in Christian education with children for the ELCA's Division for Congregational Life, is part of an inter-unit team for the development of the Peli-can Project.*

## The Peli-can Project



is a stewardship education program for children to be used by congregations, schools and camps of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Central to the project is *Peli-can* (*Peli*, for short), a brown pelican whose life story, personality and teaching are designed to motivate children to think about their part in caring for God's gifts to people. A three-year cycle of the Peli-can Project resources will be offered with the first round of materials to be introduced in Spring 1991. Care of creation, also a hunger education theme, is the focus of the first year's resources.

### Specific resources include:

*Peli-can Program Planning Guide* to help leaders plan and carry out this stewardship education program;

*I Can ... Like Peli-can*, a video to introduce Peli and the program to children;

*Peli-can hand puppet*, a soft, loveable toy-like version of the video puppet;

*Peli-can Script Book*, a set of bible-based scripts on stewardship

and care of creation, to be used with Peli the puppet;

■ *Peli-can Project Guide* for leaders to plan and carry out tree-planting and water-use projects;

■ *Peli-can Newspapers* for project participants;

■ *Peli-can Project chart and stickers* to keep track of progress on the project;

■ *Peli-can Project offering box* for children to save money for trees and pumps in Bangladesh.

**For further information** on the *Peli-can Project*, contact the ELCA Division for Congregational Life or the Commission for Financial Support (1-800-638-3522, ext. 2558 or 2749).

Doris  
Strieter

When Patricio Rodriguez wrote this plea to the president of Argentina, his father had already spent several years in an Argentine prison simply because he had been involved in labor union activities. The 1970s was a time of violence, terrorism and unstable governments in Argentina. Patricio and his parents, Juan Carlos and Marisa, were innocent victims of a period when ordinary citizens were arrested, tortured and unjustly imprisoned; when many women, men and children simply disappeared.

In 1975 Juan Carlos, a steel worker, and Marisa, who was pregnant, were kidnapped from their home and taken to a secret detention center, where for a while they unwillingly joined the ranks of "the disap-

Mr. President:  
I WANT to ask you to let my daddy  
go free Because he is good. I haven't  
seen him in such a long, long time! He  
always sends me little drawings and stories.  
I was always going to La Plata before with  
my granma... but I can't go now because  
it is very far and I would have to take a  
plane. My mother also wants him to be  
free so we could live the three of us  
together and he can buy me candy and toys.  
My friends are always asking me for my daddy.  
I tell them that when you, Mr. President,  
let my daddy go free he will take all of us  
to the park to play ball. Patricio

peared," and where they were subjected to physical and psychological abuse. For nine months they had no contact with the outside world. Only once was Juan Carlos permitted to see Marisa for a few minutes—just after she had given birth to Patricio.

When Patricio was three months old, the military government decreed that all children would be taken from the prison. Marisa watched as the guards took Patricio and his meager belongings to an unknown destination. Hundreds of Argentine children



to were taken in this manner never saw their parents again. Fortunately, when Patricio was one year old Marisa received word that he was safe with her relatives.

After five years in prison, Marisa was expelled from Argentina, reunited with her son at the airport and put on a plane to the United States. Then she began to try to re-establish a relationship with a son who hardly knew her and to work for the release of Juan Carlos and other political prisoners.

One day Juan Carlos received a letter from the United States which, she says, "came into my cell like a ray of sunlight. The letter said my wife was safe and working for my release. It was censored, but when I held it up to the light, I could see, under the censor's black markings, the words *Amnesty International*. What Juan Carlos didn't know then was that a group of people from Amnesty International, the Nobel Prize-winning human-rights organization, were working with Marisa to secure his release.

As often happens when public attention is focused on the colorless corners of the world's prison cells, the situation in Juan Carlos' prison improved and he was allowed to write and send drawings to the son he hadn't seen for so many years. Most of the colors for the drawings came from prison foods: carrots and beets for reds and oranges, coffee for maroon, herbs for green; pens were used for various shades of blue. For Juan Carlos, the drawings "represented a ray of life against the gray bars of the prison, the contrast between life in prison and the colors of hope."

After eight years in prison Juan Carlos was released, in large part because of pressure by human-rights organizations like Amnesty. Juan



*Juan Carlos drew this for his son while in prison.*

Carlos, Marisa and Patricio were reunited in the United States, where they are finally free to live together as a family.

A 20-minute video produced by Amnesty International USA and narrated by actress Meryl Streep tells the story of Juan Carlos, his family, his drawings, and his ultimate return to freedom. It is available on a free-loan basis from the Director for Service and Development, Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 8765 W. Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631. The video could be an excellent resource for International Human Rights Day, observed December 10 each year, to commemorate the 1948 United Nations adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. ■

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**For more information contact:** Amnesty International USA, 322 Eighth Avenue, New York, NY 10001, 212/807-8400.

*Doris Strieter is director for service and development, Women of the ELCA.*

# The Endnote of Advent

Judy Hoshek

Faced with the *eschaton* (pronounced *ES-ca-ton*), would you try to climb it, look for an atomic physicist, or carry on with your life normally?

*Eschatology*—the study of the *eschaton*, Greek for “last things” or the “end time”—is not a word that trips easily off our tongues. It sounds formidable, and its definition conjures up images about which we may have many questions or hesitate to speak.

A visitor to our congregation, who was in the process of examining various Christian denominations, once told me that he thought Lutherans didn’t give out enough warnings about the end of the world. I explained that each time we say the creed we affirm our belief that Jesus will “come to judge the living and the dead.” We don’t wield as a club the biblical texts that deal with the end times, but neither do we ignore them.

It is intriguing that during the season of Advent, as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus and hear John the Baptist calling people to repentance and Gabriel announcing the Incarnation, we also hear texts that talk of the end times.

That seems paradoxical. It is, after all, the *beginning* of the church year. We are gearing up to celebrate the nativity. So why the stark words from Mark: “Take heed, watch; for you do not know when the time will come,”

(13:33); or from 2 Peter: “. . . the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up” (3:12, *Lectionary for a Christian People*)?

True, Christmas proclaims God’s promise of salvation, initiated in a man-

***Eschatology***  
**is not a word that**  
**trips easily off our**  
**tongues.**



er in Bethlehem. But we can never disconnect Bethlehem from Calvary, for it is to the cross that God's act of love for the world led the baby, who became the adult who took upon himself the sin of the world. Woven through every season of the church year is the thread of God's inexorable movement toward redemption, for which, as Romans says, the whole world waits with eager longing.

The season of Advent structures for us a period of preparation so that we may once again rejoice at the mystery of the Incarnation. But in the wonderfully fluid quality that characterizes the church's marking of time, Advent also offers us opportunity to prepare for the *eschaton*, when time as we know it will cease, and our perceptions will parallel God's: one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.

When we pray the words "Come, Lord Jesus," we are inviting into our hearts and consciousness both the Christ child of Bethlehem and the Savior of the world who will come at the end of time to make his salvation complete.

The *eschaton*. Do we tremble when we imagine its meaning? Certainly not. Think of the jubilant chords of the Morning Prayer's "Te Deum" when we sing with great anticipation: "We believe that you will come and our judge" (copyright © 1978 *Lutheran Book of Worship*, pages 139-141). As people washed in the waters of baptism, we have "put on Christ," and so the end times come for us a participation in God's victory over sin and death.

As we approach the onset of the third millennium, it is inevitable that predictions of the end of the world will proliferate. There is always a fascination with the end of the world; if the 1990s parallel the 990s, there will be a flurry of movements and their prophets who read the signs of the times and try to gauge the exact day when everything will come to a halt. That is not our concern. Nor is the "when" for us to know. That it will come is all that is important. And because we believe that Jesus will come to judge the living and the dead, we face each day knowing it could be the last, but confident that our future beckons beyond anything we now know and experience. ■

*Sady Hoshek is a longtime parish worker at the Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Brooklyn, Ohio, and an active member of the Lutheran Deaconess Conference.*

## But we can never disconnect Bethlehem from Calvary.



# DIAPERS

Mary R. Schramm

**A**nd she . . . wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger" (Luke 2:7, King James Version.). In a way, Mary had it easy. She put long, narrow strips of material around her infant son to warm and comfort him. A "diaper debate" was far beyond the most enlightened imagination of her day.

In the fullness of time, cloth diapers were manufactured. Many of us still remember the chore of taking dozens of diapers off the line—sweet smelling in the summer breeze and frozen stiff in the winter.

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**We would like to think that earth-care issues were more glamorous, but in reality these ordinary issues are the choices we must make.**

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Then came disposable diapers. Not since the discovery of the baby-sitter has anything so revolutionized child care. The convenience of disposables cannot be overstated.

But this is an earthcare column. Dare we look at diapers through the eyes of faithful caretakers of the environment? Although disposable diapers make up only 2 percent of our landfill's "solid waste system," they are a graphic example of a life-style

choice that puts us in opposition to God's good earth.

A closer look at this use-it-once-throw-it-away symbol reveals that to make these diapers we are using nonrenewable resources and one billion trees a year worldwide.

The main concern, however, according to environmental researchers, is the leaching of fecal material and urine into the groundwater. Because only 5 percent of those who change disposable diapers bother to flush solid waste down the toilet, bacteria and viruses (including hepatitis and polio from vaccine residues) escape into the ground.


A recent survey indicates that 73 percent of United States citizens support a ban on the 16 billion disposable diapers sold annually. Some states are working on legislation for such a ban. The majority of those polled are probably not parents or day-care workers who dread the thought of a return to cloth diapers.

Most of us would like to think that earth-care issues were more glamorous, but in reality these ordinary issues are the choices we must make. Most often the cost is inconvenience. The rewards are an earth we can pass on proudly to our children. ■

*Mary Schramm manages St. Martin's Table, a peace and justice resource center and cafe in Minneapolis, Minnesota. A noted writer and speaker, Schramm serves as consultant for Lutheran Woman Today. Earthcare columns.*

# Everywhere a BETHLEHEM


Phyllis N. Kersten and E. Louise Williams



We simply had no idea what it would all lead to. Two Christmases ago we accepted an assignment from the Women of the ELCA to write the 1990 Bible study, *Companions on Your Journey*. For almost a full year the two of us were "in labor," writing, editing, and journeying back and forth between our homes in Forest Park, Illinois and Valparaiso, Indiana and to editor Ivis LaRiviere-Mestre's Lutheran Center office in Chicago.

But the surprise came after the Bible study was finished. Oh, Ivis had told us there would be "a few speaking engagements" such as Bible study introductory workshops "and so forth." So much for understatement!

Since October 1989, we have journeyed—alone or together—from one end of the country to another. From South Carolina to Washington and California. From Texas to Wisconsin and Minnesota. And with many stops in between—in the Dakotas, Iowa, Indiana and Michigan.



We have spoken this past year to over 5000 people in a variety of settings: Bible camps and hotels, church basements and church sanctuaries, college auditoriums. Our audiences have been rural and urban, young and old, lay and clergy, male and female, married and single, widowed and divorced—diverse in their backgrounds but united in their love for God's Word.

"**C**ompanions share their *bread*." That's what we said in the first section of the 1990 Bible study—the story of Ruth and Naomi. We discovered on our journey this past year that Women of the ELCA companions share not only bread, but also *bed*. We were taken in as guests in many homes along the way.

If you traveled with the 1990 Bible study all year long, you know that it included many journeys, but that it both began and ended in Bethlehem—"the house of bread," the birthplace of Jesus, the true Bread of Life for whom we hunger, the true Companion who promises to be with us always.

Of all the surprises this past year perhaps none is greater than this: we found everywhere a Bethlehem, everywhere "a house of bread," everywhere a place where the Word became flesh.

*Continued on next page*





In the first part of *Companions on Your Journey*, we explored the lives of Naomi and Ruth—their losses and grief, their commitments to share bread with each other, and their journey home to Bethlehem. Young women and old told us they could imagine what Naomi and Ruth experienced because they, too, had been widowed. At the Conference of Synodical Women's Organization Presidents, when we introduced the study and used the guided reflection on journeys (from the audiotape), one of the presidents told of being a young widow and finding support from companions she hadn't noticed before. Another president told of her own journey to the United States from India, a journey not unlike Naomi's.

When we visited the South Central Wisconsin Synodical Women's Organization Convention, we met a woman from a circle whose members ranged in age from 78 to 84. The members knew each other pretty well because they had been studying the Scriptures together for years. They delighted in discussing how each of them was like Ruth and each like Naomi. Another new companion thanked us for encouraging her to think about who had been a "Ruth" to her. The Bible study caused her to thank a "Ruth," now elderly, who had befriended her when she was a stranger, a young Norwegian bride unsure how to cook for German farmers.

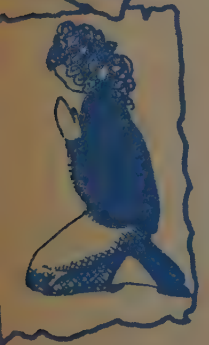
Our journeys left no doubt in our minds that the same God who worked quietly behind the scenes in the lives of Ruth and Naomi, calling them home, giving them new life, and involving them in God's own plans of salvation, is working still in and through women today.



As we traveled we were convinced, too, that the God who gave rich gifts of both men and women to the early Christian communities continues to give gifts for our journeys today. We met modern-day Phoebes and Priscillas, Dorcas and Lydia—women who made quilts and led congregations, who taught young pastors and cared for the poor, and who journeyed to faraway places to share God's love.

We felt the pain of women who, at times in their lives, have been told they couldn't, or shouldn't, do certain things they felt called to do. We met pioneers—one of the first women to serve on a churchwide board and the first women writers of Bible studies in the American Lutheran Church—who opened doors for other women to follow. And we were pleased to meet pastors—both men and women—who supported the women of the church in study of the Word and in service in the world.

We experienced both the joys and the tensions that result from changes—both in the church and in the world. The first-century Christians found themselves in congregations that today we would call inclusive. There were rich and poor, di-





fering nationalities and traditions, young and old, women and men. We met many women in this new Evangelical Lutheran Church in America opening themselves to diversity.

We heard of circles trying to do Bible study in fresh ways. This worked well for some, not as well for others. One circle started meeting over breakfast to include women who worked outside the home. Another circle who had used the *Scope* studies for years found it hard to talk about themselves as the *Companions* study suggested, but they tried and soon found themselves telling stories they had never shared about God's activity in their lives.

As we worked with the August session about praying and prophesying, we learned that women in the ELCA pray, to be sure, but that they are more reluctant to think of themselves as prophets. Still, the women often could see prophetic gifts in others. They could see their companions as people who had a vision of God's will for the world, and who through their actions and words pointed to the will of God.

We found that many women could identify with Mary, "God's companion and ours." In her song, the *Magnificat*, Mary describes herself as being of "low estate," and praises God who lifts up the lowly. When we asked, Who are the people regarded as lowly in our world? the women we met—women full of compassion—listed those who can't read, women receiving aid for dependent children, ex-offenders, people with debilitating diseases like Alzheimer's—the list went on. Then one woman said, tentatively, "Sometimes I feel like I am regarded as lowly because I am divorced and a single parent."

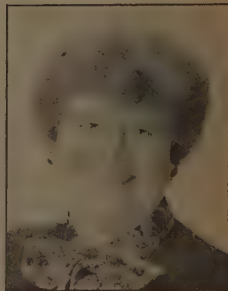
The women we have met have surely been companions to us—sharing their bread, telling their stories. We have learned that Bethlehems, the houses of bread, are everywhere—especially in those places where the Women of the ELCA are nurtured and nourished through their study of the Word and where they share themselves and God's love with companions near and far.

Like Mary, we will keep all these things and ponder them in our hearts for years to come. ■



*Phyllis Kersten serves as vice president for Wheat Ridge Foundation in Chicago.*

*Louise Williams is executive director of the Lutheran Deaconess Association at Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Indiana.*



# 12

## A Journey of the Heart

Study text: Luke 2:1-20

Phyllis N. Kersten and E. Louise Williams

### A Christmas remembrance

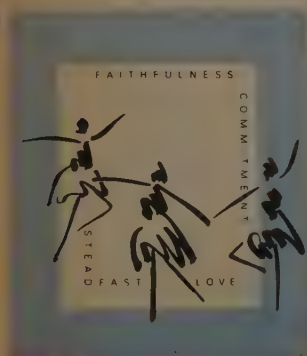
As the youngest of seven children, I remember with great joy the Christmas celebrations we had at our house. But my favorite Christmas is easy to pick out. For months I had been asking my father for a bicycle, with little hope of actually receiving it. I can still remember my brothers leading me on a wild goose chase upstairs and my joyous surprise at coming down the stairs and finding a bike in the living room after church on Christmas Eve. But I remember something even more meaningful from that Christmas. In church the pastor had given thanks for a special anonymous gift given that Christmas. I found out later in the evening that the gift had come from my Dad. That was the greatest gift my father gave me that Christmas—the example of his generosity. Now, long after his death, the spirit of his generosity and charity lives on in my mother, my brothers, and also, I hope, in me.

—Phyllis N. Kersten

Think back on your own Christmases past. Can you remember a specific one that had special meaning for you? Recall for yourself a Christmas that had special memories, either happy or painful.

### JOURNEYING THROUGH THE WORD

In today's session, we will spend some time in reflection, pondering and meditating on that first Christmas in Bethlehem. We do this with the encouragement of Martin Luther himself, who said:





"We must both read and meditate upon the Nativity. If the meditation does not reach the heart, we shall sense no sweetness, nor shall we know what solace for humankind lies in this contemplation. The heart will not laugh nor be merry. As spray does not touch the deep, so mere meditation will not quiet the heart. There is such richness and goodness in this Nativity that if we should see and deeply understand we should be dissolved in perpetual joy" (From *The Martin Luther Christmas Book*, translated and arranged by Roland H. Bainton, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1948, p. 22).

When we hear the Christmas gospel according to St. Luke, most of us picture manger scenes and children's Christmas pageants. It is all so familiar to us. Perhaps you can even recite Luke's words from memory.

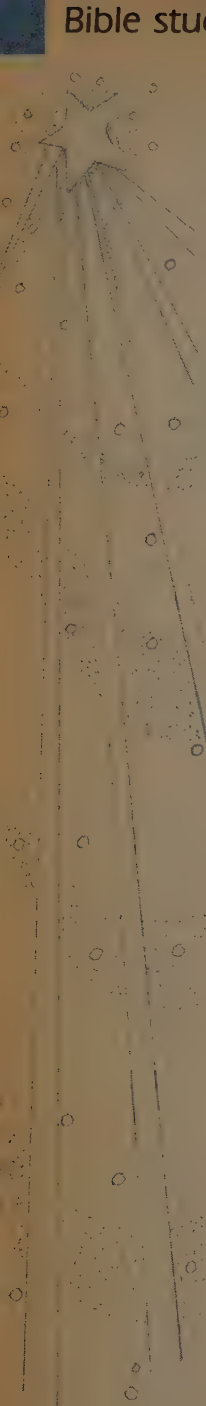
The story of Jesus' birth is a story that calls out to be known "by heart"—in our hearts, and not just in our minds. Mary knew this and provided an example for us. She "kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Luke 2:19, Revised Standard Version).

We invite you to explore Luke's Christmas text through the following guided, or reflective, meditation. This is one way that you, alone or in your study group, can invite the story into your heart, allow it to make an impression and ponder the inexpressible mystery of the birth of Jesus, the Christ.

■ You will benefit most from the reflection if you find a place away from distractions. Quiet is suggested, except perhaps for soft, reflective background music. You will probably need about 20 minutes. First, try to quiet yourself and relax as much as possible, recalling God's great love for you. Put yourself in an open, receptive mood. Pray for God's presence. Read Luke 2:1-20, perhaps out loud, seeking to put yourself in the story. Then read the guided reflection, pausing often to ponder. A "+" indicates a good place for a longer pause. If you are using the *Companions on Your Journey* audiocassette, a somewhat abbreviated version of the text of this Christmas reflection is found on side 2, section 3.

### Guided reflection

- First, imagine yourself in Joseph's place. How do you feel when you first hear of the decree from Caesar Augustus?
- Try to sense the burden of one more requirement. A census? Taxes? A journey of several days to Bethlehem?

- 
- What do you think about Mary, who is pregnant? What do you want for her? What do you try to do for her as you travel? +
  - What do you feel when you get to Bethlehem and find no suitable room for someone about to have a baby? What might you say to Mary? To God? Imagine yourself with Mary in the place where animals are kept. What does it look like? What do you hear? How does it smell?
  - What happens to you when Mary's labor pains begin? What do you experience as the child is born? Are you drawn closer? Do you look on from afar? Do you turn away? As you watch Mary care for the newborn, what do you do, or what do you say to her? To Jesus? Do you hold the baby? +
  - What do you think when you see shepherds coming—rough-and-tumble people? Are you nervous? Do you think of protecting your family?
  - How do you respond to their story of the angel's message and the song of the heavenly hosts?
  - What do you do as the shepherds leave? +

### Shepherds

Now imagine yourself as a shepherd.

- You're just doing your job—and the night shift at that. It's a night like any other—dark, full of the normal night sounds, with a sheep or lamb bleating occasionally. The time goes slowly as you wait and watch for signs of anything that would threaten your sheep, wishing that morning would come.
- Can you begin to imagine what it was like for such out-of-the-ordinary events to take place on this ordinary night? +
- What do you see when the angel appears? It almost feels as if God is present. What do you think? Can you believe your eyes? Can you feel the fear?
- The angel speaks. What does it sound like? Does it help when the angel tells you not to be afraid? +
- What do you think of the angel's "good news"? A birth in David's city—a Savior, Christ the Lord—a baby in a manger.
- Just as you are trying to sort this out, a whole chorus of heavenly hosts joins in praising God. What do you think of that? If you had to describe it, what would you say? +
- As the angels go away, what is your mood? What is the conversation with the other shepherds?

- What do you expect to find in Bethlehem? What is your mood as you travel? +
- How do you respond when you find Mary, Joseph and the baby? Do you come close, or keep your distance? Do you touch Jesus? Do you hold the baby? Do you speak? What's it like to leave? +
- How do you tell about what you have experienced?
- What do you feel as you go back to the fields and the sheep?
- How do you praise and glorify God? With song? With dance? With words? With silence? With shouts? With prayer? +

### Angel

Now imagine you are an angel.

- You live in the intensity of being in the very presence of God. You are sent as a messenger—away from the brightness of God's light and glory—to a dark field. To the most unlikely people. Can you imagine what it is like to try to translate this most wonderful of all messages so that it can be understood by simple, uneducated shepherds? What is it like when they are afraid? How do you speak to them? Do you think your message got through? +

### Baby

Now for a brief moment, even if it might be hard, imagine yourself as the baby.

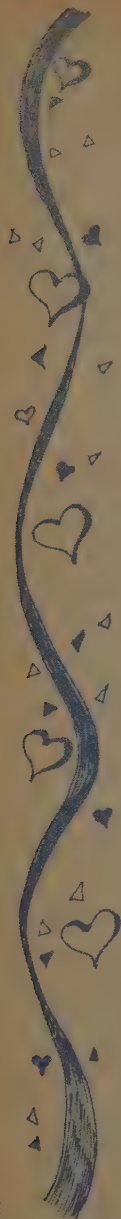
- Can you let yourself see the lights, hear the sounds, feel the air, experience your own voice crying?
- What is it like to be helpless, totally dependent upon Mary and Joseph? What is it like to be held? To be swaddled? To be fed? To be loved? To be adored? +

### Mary

Finally, imagine that you are Mary.

- What is it like for you to learn of the census and the necessary trip to Bethlehem?
- How is it for you to travel to Bethlehem? What thoughts go through your mind? Do you remember the angel and the message, "Don't be afraid . . ."? Do you think of Elizabeth, and what the two of you shared? Could you sing your song of praise and hope now? +
- What does it feel like to arrive at Bethlehem and find no





- room? What do you say to Joseph? What do you say to God?
- How do you feel about this place Joseph has found—a place where animals are kept? Are you discouraged? Do you welcome shelter, a secluded place away from the crowds? +
  - What is it like when labor begins? What are your questions, doubts, fears? Your hopes, dreams? Now can you remember the angel's words, "The Lord is with you . . ."? +
  - The baby is born. You can touch him, hold him, look at him. What goes through your mind? What is in your heart? Can you see the miracle of your first-born? Can you imagine that this little one will be great, king over Israel, reigning forever? +
  - And how does it feel to hold and swaddle "the Son of the Most High" in your trembling arms? How is it to have this one so totally dependent upon you—for food, for clothing, for shelter, for love? What are your hopes and dreams for your child? What are your fears and dreads? +
  - Allow yourself to be with the child. What do you see? Do you speak? Do you sing a lullaby? +
  - What is it like for you when the shepherds come? Are you ready to share your child—with strangers? Do you let them hold the baby? +
  - What are you feeling when the shepherds leave? +
  - What are the things you treasure and ponder in your heart? What imprint do these things make on you? What do you understand? What do you still wonder about? What memories will you carry along with you when you leave Bethlehem? +
  - Now, as you leave this familiar story, hold these things in your heart for a while. And recall once more God's great love for you.
  - Then, when you are ready, come back to the here and now, and open your eyes.

After you leave the reflection and read or hear Luke 2:1-20 again, ask yourself these questions.

**1** How was the reflective meditation for you? Was it hard or easy to "get into"?

**2** What or whom did you find easy to identify with in your imagining? Why?

What did you find difficult to identify with? Why?

Did you have any new or surprising insights as you read the story? If so, what were they?

In what ways, if any, are you like Joseph? Like the shepherds? Like the angels? Like the baby? Like Mary?

What would you especially like to ponder in your Christmas story this Christmas?

### COMPANIONS IN DEED

"There are many of you," Martin Luther wrote, "... who think to yourselves: If only I had been there! How quick I would have been to help the Baby! I would have washed his linen. How happy I would have been to go with the shepherds to see the Lord lying in the manger! Yes, you would! You say that because you know how great Christ is, but if you had been there at that time you would have done no better than the people of Bethlehem.

"Childish and silly thoughts are these! Why don't you do it now? You have Christ in your neighbor. You ought to serve him, for what you do to your neighbor in need you do to the Lord Christ himself" (*The Martin Luther Christmas Book*, p. 38).

As a way of expanding the meaning of that first Christmas, between now and Epiphany, choose some way—either by yourself or with others—to serve Christ in your neighbor. You might also want to expand your celebration of Christmas by learning about how Christmas is celebrated in an overseas country or by those who are refugees in your own community.

## COMPANIONS IN PRAYER AND PRAISE

Pray together this prayer:

*Gracious God, God of all creation, you became our companion, sharing with us not just bread, but the very Bread of Life. For this we praise you.  
As we journey to Bethlehem, you give us companions along the way. For this we thank you.  
Help us to find the "Bethlehems," the houses of bread in our lives, where our hearts can be nourished and fed.  
Help us to open our hearts to receive Christ—especially the Christ who comes in our neighbor.  
And help us to ponder in our hearts the message of your overwhelming love, this Christmas and always.  
Amen.*

Finish your time together by singing one or more of the following: *Lutheran Book of Worship* 44, "Infant Holy, Infant Lowly"; *LBW* 40, "What Child Is This"; *LBW* 70, "Go Tell It to the Mountain"; or other of your favorite Christmas songs and carols. Try to include songs from different nationalities. If you are using the *Companions on Your Journey* audiocassette, you might also wish to listen to "Joy to the World" (on side one here and sing along (see *LBW* 39).

## JOURNEYING ON

This session ends *Companions on Your Journey*. We hope you have enjoyed the trip and have found people with whom to share bread along the way. Of course, even as this study ends, our journey continues, and there are still more companions to meet on the way. May God go with you.

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**The 1991 study, *Becoming God's Children: Biblical Perspectives on Stewardship*, begins in the next issue of *Lutheran Woman Today*.**



# The Christmas Gift

Eva Augustin Rumpf

as in the midst of my usual holiday bustle, mentally going over my "to do" list as I sat in church a week before Christmas. I felt the morning rising.

Watching the advent candles on the altar being lit that morning didn't help. The three flickering candles seemed to say, "Hurry, hurry, hurry!"

At the last tones of the postlude ended, I grabbed my purse and started nudging my husband Bill toward the door. No time for chit-chat this morning. A hand touched my arm and I heard my name. I turned to find myself face to face with John, a friendly older man in the congregation.

"Good morning, John," I said, hoping I didn't sound too brusque.

"We're looking for a few families to host some African students who are in town for Christmas," he began. "Since you have college kids, your family would be ideal hosts. If you can do it, call this number."

As I took the note my mind raced through a list of excuses.

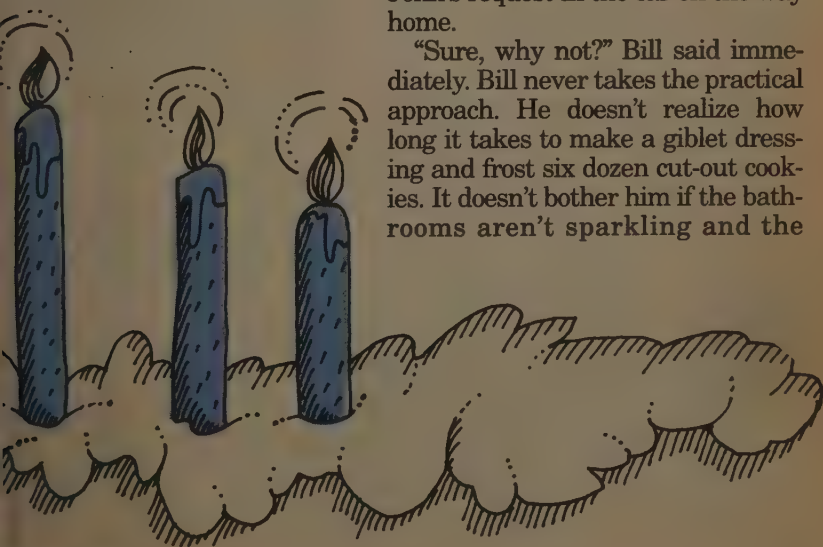
"Hope you can do it," John added. "They're desperate to find families, with Christmas only a week away."

Didn't I know it!

"Uh, well, we'll think about it," I replied, slipping the note into my purse and feeling the added weight of more obligations.

My husband and I talked about John's request in the car on the way home.

"Sure, why not?" Bill said immediately. Bill never takes the practical approach. He doesn't realize how long it takes to make a giblet dressing and frost six dozen cut-out cookies. It doesn't bother him if the bathrooms aren't sparkling and the



laundry isn't done.

I sighed in resignation.

"Well, I guess having one more person around won't make that much difference," I said. "But I wonder what this foreigner will eat, or if he or she will have strange customs. I wonder if this person is even a Christian, or speaks English." I hated to admit it, but I was worried that dealing with a strange visitor could spoil our family's Christmas celebration.

The next day, reluctantly, I called the number John had given me. The woman on the other end of the phone was tickled to get a volunteer. She assigned us a young man from Botswana who had been in the States for six months.

"Just consider him a part of your family and include him in whatever activities you normally do," she said. "And it would be nice if you had a little gift for him under your tree."

She told me his name and gave me instructions for picking him up on Christmas Eve.

My husband went to get him on a very cold Wisconsin Christmas Eve morning. I watched through the living room window as a small, dark figure got out of the car and walked up the snowy path to our door.

Our visitor was soft-spoken and rather shy. We served coffee and

Christmas cookies and soon had him talking about his country and his family back home. He talked lovingly about his parents, his brothers and sisters, and his cows—and about how he missed them all. His father was Christian, he told us, and his mother a devoted churchgoer.

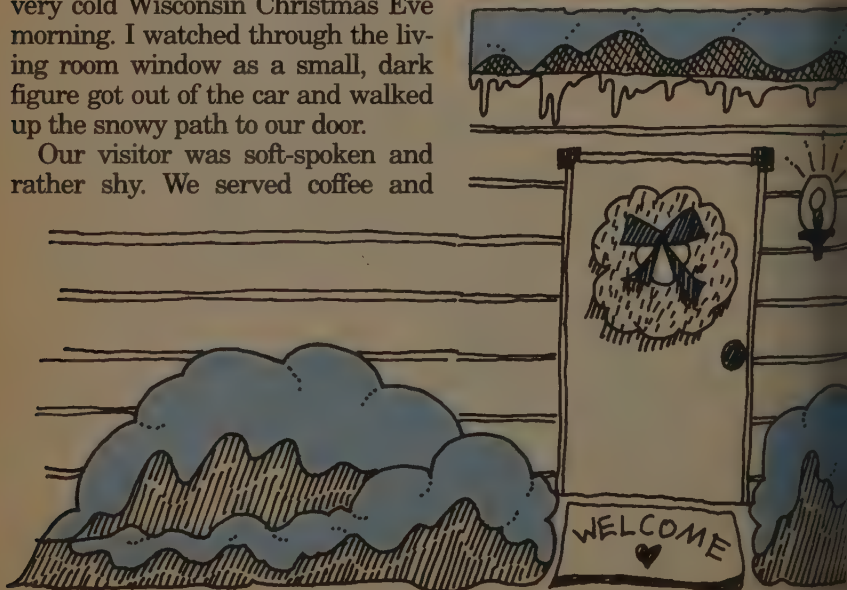
"How does your family celebrate Christmas?" I asked, both out of politeness and curiosity.

"First, we go to the farm and feed a goat," he said. "Then we have a feast. Later we exchange gifts."

"I'm afraid we won't have a goat," I said with a smile. "But will turkey and ham do?" He assured me he would eat whatever I prepared.

Slowly he eased into the rhythm of our day, talking with our four children, even teaching us a card game. When lovely, fresh snow began to fall, we urged him to put on the coat and scarf we gave him and pose on the side for pictures to send home to his family.

Late on Christmas Eve, we invited our guest to attend the candlelight service at our church.



sat in our softly lit church filled  
 acity with the mostly white fac-  
 members and visitors. Ever-  
 boughs and tiny lights draped  
 vaulted Gothic nave, and the  
 tmas star shown down from  
 choir loft. A string trio played  
 cal music before the service of  
 ngs and carols began. It all  
 ed so Western! A far cry, I  
 ht, from the lively goat meat  
 s and tribal celebrations of the  
 dry Botswana plains. The only  
 we saw that night were the  
 d wooden ones in the nativity  
 .  
 orried that we had made an aw-  
 istake to bring our guest here,  
 ust him into this alien environ-  
 and force him to celebrate  
 tmas in our way. Were we mak-  
 im feel more out of place, more  
 sick?

ar midnight, at the end of the  
 e, the light from the Christmas  
 e on the altar is passed to the  
 egation. Each person lights a  
 e, holding it as we sing "Silent  
 ." It's always a beautiful, in-  
 g moment, a time when all  
 c preparations are forgotten  
 rappings stripped away to re-  
 he heart of Christmas. But I  
 ered if this moment would have  
 ame meaning for our visitor,

who was thousands of miles away  
 from all he loved.

I turned to look at my young Af-  
 rican friend. His face looked peace-  
 ful, and his lips were moving.  
 Through the sound of the words be-  
 ing sung by voices all around me, I  
 heard his own words, strange, yet fit-  
 ting. He was singing "Silent Night"  
 in his tribal language! He had found  
 a connection, after all, in our Christ-  
 mas.

His quiet singing showed us that  
 Christmas belongs to none of us ex-  
 clusively and to all of us universally.  
 He reminded us that the message of  
 Christ's birth transcends culture.  
 Our African guest had brought us a  
 Christmas gift more valuable than  
 all the ones under our tree. ■

*This true story is written by Eva  
 Augustin Rumpf, who describes her-  
 self as "a woman never quite ready  
 for Christmas." A public relations  
 professional and free-lance writer,  
 Eva Rumpf is a lifelong member of  
 the United Church of Christ and lives  
 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.*





# The Many Christmases of Christmas

Irene Getz

For years, my mother and I looked forward to celebrating Christmas with my brother and his family. We especially enjoyed his two little boys, watching their delight with the Christmas tree and all the activities we did together.

Then things changed. As happens in many families, there was a divorce; later my brother moved to another state. Now the boys celebrate Christmas Eve with their mom and travel on Christmas Day to be with their dad. Their Christmas changed, and so had ours.

We adjusted by remembering that the celebration of Jesus' birth need not be confined to December 24 or 25. The next year, for instance, we invited the boys over on December 23 and had a delightful "little Christmas." Together we sang carols, read about the birth of Jesus from Luke's gospel, ate Christmas treats, opened presents and played with a new board game.

Many of us in today's world have several sets of people we want to be with on Christmas, but conflicting schedules and long distances often keep us apart. There may be a number of activities and observances we would like to include in our celebration, but we can't squeeze them all

in. We don't need to let such problems weigh us down or make us frazzled. Christmas, and all that means to us, can be celebrated many times and in many ways.

When we put so much of our emphasis on December 25, the chance for experiencing disappointment is greatly increased. With so much energy invested in one day, there is inevitable letdown when not every kind of cookie is made, or a gift doesn't seem appreciated, or the rush to church makes people flustered and harried.

How much more helpful it can be to adjust our thinking and remind ourselves that the meaning of Christmas is broader than the details of Christmas. In our preparation, we are wise to let our plans flow from the quiet knowledge that God came to us in human form and loves us with an eternal, infinite love. With that assurance in our hearts, we can find that Christmas is not limited by time.

My mother and others in their 60s and 80s remember celebrating 12 days of Christmas—from Christmas Day through Epiphany, January 6. People would visit each other's homes, plan dinners and parties, sing carols and find all kinds of ways

ly enjoy the season.

England and some other countries the 12 days of Christmas are observed. And in the Caribbean and other Latin American countries, the coming of the Three Kings, Epiphany, that is the celebrative highlight of the season.

The worship services in our churches continue to emphasize Christ's birth through Epiphany, on January 6, when we remember the

*Christmas,  
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of the Wise Men. But in our per-  
lives we have a tendency to act  
ough all thought of celebrating  
tmas ends the evening of De-  
er 25. The commercialization of  
tmas, no doubt, contributes to  
thinking as we flock to the  
-Christmas" sales.

we can find ways to celebrate  
tmases—both before the actual  
on the calendar and after. Re-  
ring the customs of celebrating

the 12 days of Christmas and high-  
lighting Epiphany can give us new  
insight into the holidays and can re-  
fresh us.

Also, we can plan special times, even brief ones, during the weeks before Christmas. We might invite grandparents to our home or visit them, take children on a special outing, or attend a concert that nourishes our spirit. We can sign up to go caroling, have fun with others decorating the church, bring some new toys to a collection center, or take time to enjoy Christmas music we love. We can count each one of these a celebration, a "little Christmas."

Then if Christmas Day ends up being different from what we'd hoped, or different from past Christmases, we can look back and take note of how many opportunities we created to celebrate—through people, events and quiet time—the substance of the holy day. Merry Christmases to you. ■

*Irene Getz, an editor of Augsburg books for Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, has been a teacher and counselor and worked as director of adult ministries with the American Lutheran Church, and a staff member for the Lutheran Church in America in education.*

# A Language of the Heart

Fern Lee Hagedorn

"Why do *Gung-gung* (Grandpa) and *Po-po* (Grandma) speak Chinese?" my three-year-old asked recently.

"Because they are Chinese, just like you and Mommy," I replied to little Mun.

"But you're not Chinese, Mommy," Mun retorted. "You don't talk like *Gung-gung* and *Po-po*."

"But we do sometimes, dear. You and I are Chinese."

"I am not, Mommy!" he said, turning away. I was beginning to feel irritated over what seemed to be a looming identity crisis. Then he turned back and emphatically stated: "I am MUN!"

All I could do was to hug my son after this interchange, for in fact, he was right. He and his rainbow of playmates do not look at themselves in terms of color or ethnicity . . . only by name. This is God's outlook, too, I think. God knows us and calls us by name, not by color. We Christians know this—it is nothing new.

**But we have a difficult time recognizing** that there are still some in the church who operate by race, and not by name. Although blatant racism is not acceptable, its more subtle manifestations are on the increase.

Hear, for example, statements like these, espoused by some: "Goals for inclusive membership are inappropriate because they preempt the action of the Holy Spirit," or "We cannot give up our Lutheran confessional heritage for the sake of a multicultural church." It's funny how some people think they have the last word on the Holy Spirit or Lutheran tradition.

I started attending the Lutheran church in my neighborhood at age eight, experiencing Baptism when I was 12. I don't know life outside of God's love and care. It is in this context that I reflect upon the salvation of family members: my unbaptized elderly parents and my baptized toddler.

**I will be able to talk with Mun,** I trust, about matters of faith in our common language, a language I have mastery over, for English—and Western culture—have become the language of my heart.

As for my mother and father, our heart languages do not coincide. I cannot communicate my feelings, in any deep sense to them, in their heart language. The problem is not purely linguistic, but encompasses a variety of cultural dif-



ces. I become concerned not only about Mom and Dad's eternal salvation, but about their present earthly lives. I am not able to use their heart language to share with them how much God has influenced my life. Perhaps they know by my behavior. Perhaps they know this through my participation in the church. Perhaps they sense this through their son-in-law who is a Lutheran pastor. Perhaps they know by my love for them.

**How much more enriched my parents' lives** would be if they could hear of the love of God in their heart language. How much more strength they would have if they knew that God is on their side. How much weight would be lifted from their shoulders if they could experience in their heart language that God accepts them and loves them for who they are. A church that wants to reach people such as my parents needs to recognize the value of accepting them in their own heart language.

The church must understand that my parents and others are thirsting for intimacy with God; they need to see how they and those who believe in God fit into their lives. I thirst for some tools from the church to be an effective instrument of the Holy Spirit to persons such as they. The church needs to make more clearly that evangelism is not so much a task of bringing people *into* the church, but taking Jesus *out* into the world to those who may never enter a church building. The church can also take down its own cultural barriers which have impeded, temporarily, the Holy Spirit from entering many hearts. There are people on this continent who hunger and thirst for Christ's body and blood, but who do not identify with bread and wine; they don't feel spiritually uplifted during an organ prelude, nor feel worshipful jug-bug to a hymnal, bulletin and offering envelopes.

**And God bless . . .” is the litany Mun and I** use in our nightly prayers. We name friends and family, we remember children who do not have beds to sleep in or food to eat. On one tired night, I rushed through our conversation with God. After the last “Amen,” while I tucked my son, Mun said, “But we forgot to bless my grandparents.” Don't forget Mun's grandparents. Don't forget to share God's blessings with the many in our society waiting to be blessed by the Spirit. They are waiting for us to spread the Gospel in their heart language. When we are able to do this, we will have a Lutheran church which truly reflects the vibrant colors of God's rainbow. ■

*Lee Hagedorn, a church communicator and video producer, directs research on audiovisual translations of the Scriptures for the American Bible Society. She is a member of Matthew's Trinity Lutheran Parish, a multicultural congregation in Hoboken, New Jersey.*



# Waking Up to Our Multicultural Church

Madeleine Forell Marshall

The multicultural vision is familiar by now. We have seen the beautiful photographs of children of different races playing together. We've read the inspirational stories of successful ethnic ministries. It's easy to imagine we've made it, that we're a diverse and inclusive church, "home free." But we're not there yet—not by a long shot.

A multicultural Lutheran church is more than simply a dream or a future vision of the kingdom of God come to earth. It is a very real goal, a reformation we see as exciting and rich. The vision of a multicultural church is like waking up from a boring, if comfortable, dream of ethnic homogeneity.

And in the waking up, we learn something about "church ownership." The church is my church, true; but it is not exclusively mine. The church is mine as the center of my Christian experience—the church in which I was brought as a baby or came as an adult, the church where I see my friends and where we share our joys and our griefs. The church speaks my language, directly and clearly, in love and proclamation. It relates to my life and experience. When it ceases to be my church, I cease to belong.

Yet at the same time my church isn't mine in all in the possessive sense: it's not *my* possession, *my* territory, *my* sacristy, *my* kitchen, *my* tradition. God's house, the temple of the Lord, the body of Christ—Christian language such as this reminds us what belongs to whom! Half asleep we can stumble and get it wrong. When we wake up, we belong to the church—beginning to end—but we don't possess it. Jealous possessiveness has no place in the kingdom.

The multicultural church we awake to is bursting with energy of all kinds, energy to learn and teach, energy

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and enable, energy to praise and give thanks, energy to love and forgive. It is not filled with believers who are burned out or fed up or disheartened.

A multicultural church both takes and gives energy. When we learn another language, 10 minutes of careful listening is exhausting. But finally understanding, getting it right, is exhilarating. Trying to make ourselves understood, communicating our common faith across cultural differences, is an essential task that takes energy and resolve.

A multicultural church to which we are awakened has the intellectual energy to interpret and to understand old and new ideas. It has the energy to pick up wounds and to redress grievances, to love. It has the financial energy to equip leaders, provide them with materials, and to pay their salaries, including health insurance and pension.

A waking multicultural vision is nothing remarkably new. It's old news that Christians are a wonderfully diverse people. We have known for years about the faithful communities of Christian people around the world. Many of us have met African Lutherans and Latin American Lutherans and Asian Lutherans. They preach and teach and give us new hope.

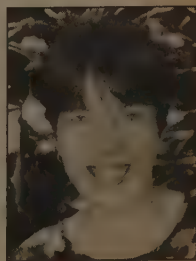
The church we know accommodates, even thrives on, difference. Healthy congregations have always admitted socioeconomic difference and different life experience and various tastes. Certainly Lutheran "languages other than English" are old news. In many communities numbers of Lutheran congregations coexist and cooperate, evidence of acceptance of cultural diversity.

We know, too, that loving our neighbor is a church basic. It's old news. And we know that our neighbor is a person we might not exactly understand or trust. Jesus taught us about that.

The pieces are all in place. We must pray for the grace to give up ownership, the energy necessary to learn and listen, to serve and enable, the love to forgive and bind up wounds and redress grievances. We have to wake up and get down to work. Then we'll find that the multicultural church of our dreams was there all the time. ■

*Madeleine Marshall serves as secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Commission for Multicultural Ministries board. The mother of three, she lives and works in English and women's studies in southern California where her husband is director for Hispanic outreach for the Pacifica Synod of the ELCA.*

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# Time to Hear

Linda Woods Peterson

Last May in a Lutheran Woman Today article titled "Whose Image?" readers were given opportunity to respond to some questions about an activity in which most of us spend at least part of our time—even during the busy Christmas season—television viewing.

You took time then to reflect on and share your TV habits, and we promised that we would get back to you about what you said. The thoughtful comments you sent, in response to that article, are valuable. They not only provide insight into your viewing choices; they also make the connection that God can and does speak to open ears and hearts in unusual ways, even in our "spare time."

One reader commented that Angela Lansbury's character on "Murder, She Wrote" reminds her of the importance of placing value on friendships and respect for human differences. Another reader enjoys the same program and finds that both the actress and her character provide a strong role model for middle-aged and older women. One writes, "It puts older women in a positive light of being capable, mature, respected and contributing members of society."

Nancy Weston, a character from "thirtysomething" provides a younger Illinois reader the opportunity to reflect and think about her own life, reminding her that she is not alone in the challenges she faces.

Although for a couple of the respondents, "Television is a waste of time," clearly the majority of LWT readers responded by finding selected viewing of programs to be positive. Perhaps those who have been disillusioned by poor programming may want to have a closer look; there are some good programs, and some good and helpful messages.

Listen to what readers of LWT had to say about their favorites. We received over 250 responses and can't include them all in this article, but here are a few favorite programs that readers find time to view.

"The Cosby Show" won the highest praise for its portrayal of a family who faces life with compassion, honesty

nor. You might think readers chose it for its laugh-value, that was only a small factor. Most watch Cosby, they like it, because they find values they share with the television family; occasionally viewers find, through Claire and Cliff, comfortable, ideas for handling family concerns in their own homes. Based on those responding, the average age of the LWT viewer of Cosby: 55.

"Murder, She Wrote" was a very close second with its depiction of the capable, compassionate and complete woman, J. B. Fletcher. Several of you felt we need more programs with positive images of women. The value you see in this program is not in the entertainment of mystery, but rather in the image and model you find in this older actress that encourages you to live a full life too! Average age of LWT viewers of "Murder, She Wrote": 56.

"Full House" and "Growing Pains" remind some of you of the days when your own households were buzzing. You find these programs bring you laughter and warm memories of when you were "a busy mother." Average age of responding LWT viewers of these programs: 72.

"Murphy Brown" portrays a character many of you appreciate because she is imperfect, independent, ambivalent, successful and honest. Average age of LWT viewers of "Murphy Brown": 52.

"L.A. Law" is a favorite for some of you, and you all have unique reasons for watching. You may share the values of the characters, or you may enjoy the ongoing nature of a legal trial. Average age of LWT "L.A. Law" viewers: 55.

Another type of program is attractive to many respon-





dents because it is complete in the evening. These programs, like the Hallmark specials, programs on the Arts & Entertainment Network, documentaries and nature programs on Lifetime, Discovery and the Learning Channel all attract viewers who enjoy "seeing the world" and the comfort of their own homes. The age range for these programs runs the full spectrum of our survey: ages 20 to 87.

Some of you find characters that are Christ-like in such diverse characters as Balky in "Perfect Strangers," nurse McMurphy in "China Beach," Claire Huxtable of the Cosby family, and David Addiss in "Moonlighting."

You shared that you have less time to view television because your life is so full. Others wrote that television provides a "companion" when you invest years mothering your

children, or a "window to a bigger world" when physical limitations reduce mobility.

Whether it's the "good medicine" a reader named Rachel finds in laughing during "Roseanne," or the "affirmative attitudes" toward the developmentally different Corky in "Life Goes On," that Sybil wrote about, seeing things in a new way brings insight, healing, and recognition. Marjorie recognized that, like Emma on "Young Riders," she too is a "caretaker who needs care herself once in awhile." Ann recognizes that Sam in "Quantum Leap" leaves things better than they were before, and that he, like all of us, is a "pilgrim trying to get home."

Many of you recognize the value in time spent viewing selected programs. You requested ideas about how you might better select and use the media to your benefit.

The three media articles in this series—May, October, and December—have sought to provide a foundation for reflection on the media. Programming and advertisements with their persistent messages are part of our complex life. Some people choose simply not to watch, though many prefer to select carefully what they watch.

One basic rule is always to remember that there is an on button and an off button. Select a program, turn on the television and view. When the program is over, turn off the set. It seems simplistic, but billions of dollars are spent to capture your attention and seduce you into continued viewing, even



When your selected program is over. When you use the off button, you are making a choice that says you are in control and won't be bought.

Or try this: Make a conscious choice when you arrange or rearrange the furniture. Think, "Is this important to me? Music? Visiting or calling family and friends?" Place the television set in a place where it will not disturb your preferred life-style. If possible, give TV its own room. Then you really will be able to make a conscious choice to be there and watch.

Once you have a clearly designated viewing space, why not make it a eating, nonsleeping space? That will deter potential "couch potatoes" from eating in front of the tube; it will also prevent the initial overstimulation of the senses that television viewing awakens, which may contribute to insomnia. It may also improve your communication with family members and friends.

If you share your household with children, remember that you are the primary role model for your children. Research indicates that what you value, your children will also likely value too.

The next time you sit down to watch TV, be selective. To help you, there are viewing guides specifically written for cable or network television. Some are publications available at the grocery checkout, others appear in your newspaper. Look at your viewing guide. Along with the list of programs you'd like to watch, keep a list of other activities you'd like to do "when you have time." Choose things that will refresh and encourage you. In this is a season of anticipation, take time to listen. God may use unlikely voices and images to share a good word with you. ■

This article is the final in a three-part series on media and technology by Linda Woods Peterson, a Chicago, Illinois, freelance writer and communicator. Her recent book *Electronic Line: Media Exploration for Christian Youth* has just been published by Friendship Press (\$13.95) and is available through Augsburg Fortress locations.



## Brief Prayers on News Items

Sonia C. Groenewold

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### Ecumenical work strengthened in Hong Kong

As growing numbers of Christians exit Hong Kong because of the takeover by China coming in 1997, main-line Protestant churches have pledged to continue evangelization there. Lutherans, Anglicans, Baptists and Methodists drew up a manifesto stating, among other things, that the church in the midst of political change should, with the people, seek a political structure which respects human rights, freedom and democracy.

*Lord of Freedom, guide Hong Kong Christians through the difficult years of transition.*

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### ELCA border ministry spans many cultures

The ELCA is reaching out to all cultures along the 1,500-mile border separating Mexico and the United States. The church is in ministry with immigrants and refugees, and with migrant communities—both the Hispanics who go north for summer fieldwork and Anglos who winter in the south. Bilingual and multicultural, the border ministry closely links word and sacrament with service.

*Bless the border ministry, O God, and all who are active in it.*

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### Finnish Lutherans approve women as bishops

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland voted this year to open episcopate to women. The church approved the ordination of women in 1986 but at that time did not take position on allowing women to be consecrated as bishops. Archbishop John Vikstrom, of the church of Turku synod, hailed the timing, saying the passage of the proposal at first attempt allows the church to go on with other important matters.

*Thank you, Lord, for continued opportunities for women in ministry.*

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### ELCA develops statement on death penalty

The ELCA Commission for Church in Society is studying the issue of death penalty. Its first draft paper is available for discussion from ELCA Distribution Service, phone 800-328-4648. The commission encourages response from congregations and individuals.

*Lord of Life, raise our awareness and concern on this and other issues facing church and society.*

Let the local, national and international news provide you with material to build a daily prayer list. ■

*Sonia C. Groenewold is news editor of The Lutheran.*

# Faithful Stewardship



Lilyan Pollack

When stewardship time approaches in our churches, some of us clutch our checkbooks a little tighter and hope we'll be out of the house when the call comes asking us to increase our giving for the next year.

"I know I need to save money and I want to tithe regularly," a friend of mine told me recently. "But I just can't seem to make ends meet. After paying all the bills and meeting basic living expenses, I have very little left over each month to give to others."

Do these reactions sound familiar? As a professional financial counselor, I often hear these words. People know they should be saving part of their income regularly. They know they need to plan for their family's financial security in case of the death or disability of one of the family's providers. They want to be good stewards of their money. But juggling all these financial "oughts" can seem overwhelming.

Most people already know what they need to do to get their finances in order, but they lack a plan. Helping people identify their financial needs and develop plans for achieving their goals is one of the most rewarding aspects of my job.

Because financial planning is a highly personal business requiring in-depth analysis of a person's finan-

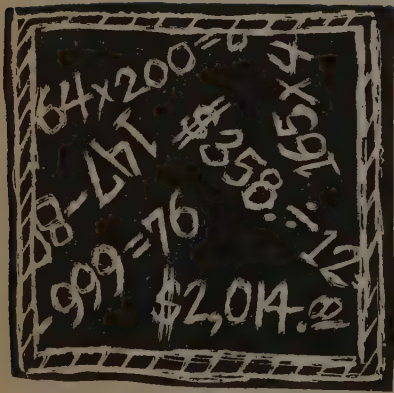


cial history, I am reluctant to rattle off 10 easy steps to guarantee financial happiness. There are basic principles, however, that people can follow in being good stewards of their money. As a Christian in the financial planning industry, I feel a responsibility to help people manage their resources wisely, following some scriptural principles.

**"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"**  
(Matthew 6:21, New Revised Standard Version).

When the financial squeeze is on, most people tend to drop their savings and tithing practices first. "We can always make it up next month," many reason. Ever catch yourself thinking this way?

One rule of thumb suggests a



*If you've fallen into the habit of giving and saving from "leftover" money at the end of each month, consider reversing this practice.*

spending plan of giving 10 percent, saving 10 percent and spending 80 percent. Some people prefer to vary the figures slightly, giving 10 percent, saving 15 percent and spending 75 percent. The exact percentages are not as important as the order in which you carry out these steps. If you've fallen into the habit of giving and saving from "leftover" money at the end of each month, consider reversing this practice. Begin next month by setting aside your 10 percent tithe and 10 percent for saving. Then work with the remaining 80 percent to budget for expenses.

Why be good stewards? First Peter 4:10-11 encourages us to serve others through our gifts in order that everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. Seeing that God is glorified by our giving is an exciting part, for instance, of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Mission90's, "Tithers by the Million." This emphasis encourages us to *see, grow and serve* in the area of personal giving.

When we see needs in our community, nation and world, we are compelled to reach out. In the process of discovering how we can help others with our gifts, we grow. By exercising our gifts and giving generously, we serve.

**"Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver"**  
(2 Corinthians 9:7, NRSV).

What is your vision for Mission in the area of stewardship? Some of us may want to begin with "growing giving," gradually increasing our pledge to 10 percent. Repositioning priorities and resources may be a major challenge for the year.

Others of us who have already developed a discipline for giving may not consider how we can make our gifts grow. In the parable of the talents, Jesus commends the servants who invest the money entrusted to them. Many of us may believe, correctly, that our "widow's mite" is not amount to much; yet there are many ways to multiply our gifts to the church.

Through planned giving, modest gifts can grow to become major donations. Planned giving breathes life into the hopes, dreams and desires of congregations, institutions and agencies of the church.

Using life insurance as a vehicle for planned giving has some unique advantages. A person can purchase a life insurance contract and assign it to the church as owner and beneficiary. The church benefits from the policy's growth in the contract while the donor is still living, and is then the beneficiary of the proceeds of the contract when the donor dies. In turn, the donor realizes a tax deduction for paying the premiums on the contract.

In many churches this deferred gift is placed in an endowment fund. The congregation typically uses the interest, rather than the principal, from the endowment to fund long-range ministry objectives.

People interested in multiplying their gifts through planned giving, or who want help in identifying their financial needs and goals, will want to talk to a financial expert such as a professional insurance agent or financial counselor. To ensure that you're getting professional service, be sure to work with a reputable financial institution recognized by the financial services industry. Make certain that your financial institution is rated "A+" by A.M. Best, the



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most comprehensive rating service in the industry. This information is contained in *Best's Insurance Reports*, an annual publication available in public libraries.

As children of God in Christ, we know that accumulation of wealth is not an end in itself. We are thankful for how God has blessed our lives, and in celebration we give to others. If we were to work seriously and creatively on our personal and congregational financial plans, as faithful stewards, we could feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and still have baskets full left over. ■

*Lilyan Pollack is an independent financial counselor and a district representative for Lutheran Brotherhood. She is a member of Redeemer Lutheran Church in Park Ridge, Illinois.*

# Financial Report

of Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
for the period ending February 28, 1990

## REVENUE/SUPPORT AND EXPENDITURES

### Revenue/Support

Offerings	Budget	Actual
Regular Offerings	\$1,150,000	\$1,334,9
Thankofferings	1,724,300	1,616,8
Designated Gifts	500,000	471,7
Special Offerings	—	16,9
Other Offerings	90,000	147,7
<i>Total Offerings</i>	<i>3,464,300</i>	<i>3,588,3</i>
<b>Other Revenue</b>		
Investment Income	380,000	463,6
Other/Misc. Revenue	1,000	6
<i>Total Other Revenue</i>	<i>381,000</i>	<i>464,3</i>
<i>Total Revenue/Support</i>	<i>\$3,845,300</i>	<i>\$4,052,6</i>

### Expenditures

Mission: Growth	\$ 603,986	\$ 638,6
Mission: Action	582,984	518,5
Mission: Community	1,033,430	673,5
Scholarships and Grants	—	26,3
Governance	115,700	193,8
<i>Total Programmatic and Administration</i>	<i>2,336,100</i>	<i>2,051,0</i>

<b>Gift to the ELCA</b>	<i>1,275,000</i>	<i>1,275,1</i>
<i>Total Expenditures</i>	<i>\$3,611,100</i>	<i>\$3,326,1</i>

These Financial Statements have been summarized from actual audited figures for presentation purposes. They represent the financial activity and position of Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for the twelve months ending February 28, 1990. For presentation consistency, all salary and administrative expenses have been allocated over the three mission areas. All financial activity of the churchwide organization has been, and will continue to be, approved by the Churchwide Executive Board of Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. These financial statements are presented with the approval of the executive board, as required by the constitution of this organization.

Jonathan Kalkwarf  
Director for Finance and Administration



# Balance Sheets as of February 28, 1990 and 1989

## ASSETS

Current Funds	1990	1989
Short-term Investments	\$ 150,000	\$ 150,000
Due from the ELCA	2,327,323	1,706,950
Other Assets	1,516	150
<b>Total Current</b>	<b>2,478,839</b>	<b>1,857,100</b>
Endowment Funds and Funds Functioning as Endowment Funds		
Participation in ELCA		
Investment Fund	2,315,883	2,252,493
Other Investments	180,502	162,200
<b>Total Endowments</b>	<b>2,496,385</b>	<b>2,414,693</b>
Plant Fund	57,346	—
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$5,032,570</b>	<b>\$4,271,793</b>

## LIABILITIES AND FUND BALANCES

Current Funds	1990	1989
Liabilities	\$ 212,581	\$ 178,255
Undesignated Funds	1,371,629	1,349,204
Designated Funds	802,352	285,448
Restricted Funds	92,277	44,193
<b>Total Current</b>	<b>2,478,839</b>	<b>1,857,100</b>
Endowment Funds and Funds Functioning as Endowment Funds		
Undesignated as to use of income	414,941	414,941
Designated as to use of income	939,438	921,136
Fund gains (losses)	21,754	—
Restricted as to use of income	1,120,252	1,078,616
<b>Total Endowments</b>	<b>2,496,385</b>	<b>2,414,693</b>
Plant Fund	57,346	—
<b>Total Liabilities and Funds</b>	<b>\$5,032,570</b>	<b>\$4,271,793</b>

# RESOURCES

## **B**ECOMING is the 1991 program theme for Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Becoming enables us to grow in our faith. This is a matter of growing in the Spirit. The Spirit of God teaches us how to articulate our faith. We grow in understanding of our relationship with God and our neighbor. This growth affects the way we live in relationship with our sisters and brothers in Christ. For as Paul said: "the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God" (Romans 8:26-27, New Revised Standard Version).

## **LWT** Bible study

### *Becoming God's Children: Biblical Perspectives on Stewardship*

is the new Bible study in the 1991 January through December issues of Lutheran Woman Today. The study will provide insights about the stewardship of life: who we are in God's world, and how we live out that identity to God's glory. The leader guide, sold separately, will assist the leader in facilitating group study and dis-

cussions. The Bible study resource book, sold separately, complements the study with biblical commentary, theological insights, and suggestions for personal growth. Order one per participant and leader.

2-9125 Resource book .....\$3.50  
2-9126 Leader guide .....\$2.75

## **P**rogram Series

### *Women: Becoming A Service of Celebration*

is a program which introduces the 1991 theme. This program explores how women are in a constant process of becoming. That is, becoming disciples, becoming whole and holy people of God, and becoming witnesses of God's love to others.

2-9077 .....\$1.25

### *Those Who Have No Keys: Homelessness in our Communities*

explores a sensitive topic by asking basic questions like: What is the definition of a home? Who are the people in our society who have no home? What can be done to help their situation? The program provides biblical passages for discussion, dramatic readings, group discussion, and activities.

2-9061 .....\$1.25

# COMING . . .

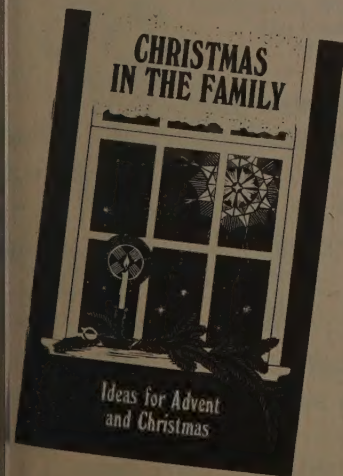
## Gifted Series

*Learned to Listen: An Evangelism Tool* provides participants with an understanding about the significance of active listening when we share our faith with others. This resource includes biblical references on how we actively listened to those believers who were in need of hearing Christ's message of hope and salvation. Options for a one-day or two-day retreat program are included.

062 .....\$1.50

*Learned with Tears and Laughter* is a program which celebrates women's lives of tears and laughter. The program explores biblical passages, suggests hymns, and includes stories, group discussion and a litany.

050 .....\$1.50



## Other new resources

*Christmas in the Family: Ideas for Advent and Christmas* provides devotional suggestions and activities for families to use in their homes. This resource will encourage families to reflect on the meaning that the Advent and Christmas seasons have for them.

2-9032 .....\$1.50

*Joyful, Thankful, Prayerful: Images of Women of the ELCA* is a 17-minute video (1/2" VHS) which tells the story of Women of the ELCA. There is a 16-page video guide included with suggestions for group discussions.

35-801-2102 ..... \$10.00

## Promotional pieces

The September 1990 resource packet includes a promotional brochure on these new resources. Also available, on a first-come, first-serve basis, are complimentary copies of the Women of the ELCA 1990-91 catalog from the Augsburg Fortress Minneapolis location. Please contact Jill Cornell, director of retail sales, at 1-800-328-4648, ext. 538. ■

*Ivis LaRiviere-Mestre*  
Director for Educational  
Resources



# A Prayer for Children

We pray for children

who put chocolate fingers everywhere,  
who like to be tickled,  
who stomp in puddles and ruin their new pants,  
who sneak popsicles before supper,  
who erase holes in math workbooks,  
who can never find their shoes.

And we pray for those

who stare at photographers from behind barbed wire,  
who can't bound down the street in a new pair of sneakers,  
who never "counted potatoes,"  
who are born in places we wouldn't be caught dead,  
who never go to the circus,  
who live in an X-rated world.

We pray for children

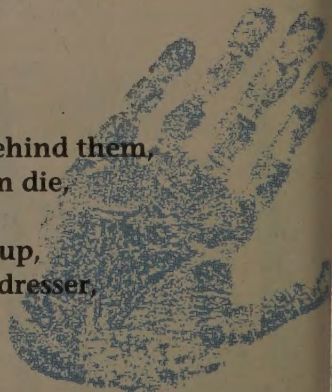
who bring us sticky kisses and fistfuls of dandelions,  
who sleep with the dog and bury goldfish,  
who hug us in a hurry and forget their lunch money,  
who cover themselves with Band-aids and sing off key,  
who squeeze toothpaste all over the sink,  
who slurp their soup.

And we pray for those

who never get dessert,  
who have no safe blanket to drag behind them,  
who watch their parents watch them die,  
who can't find any bread to steal,  
who don't have any rooms to clean up,  
whose pictures aren't on anybody's dresser,  
whose monsters are real.

We pray for children

who spend all their allowance before Tuesday,  
who throw tantrums in the grocery store and pick at their food,  
who like ghost stories,  
who shove dirty clothes under the bed, and never rinse  
out the tub,





Revised Standard Version

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